

Gertie Goggins

The longtime Washougal resident dedicated 57 years to nursing career, many more as local volunteer

By SANDRA WALTERS
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Having been part of the area since 1942, Gertie Goggins has touched the lives of many in the community through her work as the Camas mill nurse and her volunteer work with local organizations.

Goggins, 85, was born and raised in Montana. After graduating from high school in 1927, she began her course of study to become a nurse and completed her training in 1930.

"I was just out of school in 1930 and on my way to post-graduate school in Chicago, when I thought I'd take a private duty case and ended up in Appleton, Wisc.," Goggins, of Washougal, said. "Well I never made it to Chicago — the doctor told me he'd keep me busy if I stayed — so I did."

Goggins said she had always wanted to be a nurse ever since her mother had had surgery and a private nurse took care of her.

"I also had an appendix removed, and that sealed my decision to become a nurse," she said.

It was while living in Wisconsin that Goggins met her first husband, Maurie Kinney, who happened to be her roommate's brother. The couple married in 1933.

After living in the area for a number of years, the couple decided to move because Goggins suffered from severe hayfever. It was while taking care of the daughter-in-law of the Camas mill assistant manager, in Wisconsin, that the idea of heading for this small community came into play.

"It was during the war and the manager knew we had to move," Goggins recalled. "He told my husband if he wanted to work in the mill, there would be a job waiting for him. He came in March of 1942 and I followed with the three kids in October. I couldn't leave my patient any earlier."

Goggins said she and her trio were quite a sight traveling cross-country to get to the local area. "I drove out, pulling a trailer with everything in it," she said.

After arriving, the family settled into a small cottage near Gibbons Creek in Washougal. Goggins said at the time, it was difficult to find any housing at all because of World War II and the work being done at the shipyards in Vancouver.

Goggins hadn't planned on working once the family moved to the area, but she got involved in a number of volunteer projects and worked in a Vancouver hospital.

"I don't know how I got involved in things, I just get into stuff," she said smiling.

When Goggins first came to Washougal she said there was no PTA and since she had kids in the school district, starting one just seemed like the logical thing to do. So, she started a PTA at Hathaway Elementary School.

Because of the war, Goggins went back to work as a nurse at Memorial Hospital in

Vancouver.

"Nurses were scarce because all the young and unattached ones were serving in the service for the war," Goggins said. "I had no intention when we came out to go to work, but they needed me and I just stayed with it."

Goggins said at one point, the couple worked opposite shifts from each other and they had only one car. "Things could get pretty hectic," she said.

Through the hectic shifts and raising a family, she still found time to volunteer for blood drives with American Red Cross. When the flood of 1948 happened, she was there once again to lend a hand.

"So many people needed typhoid shots," she said. "We gave shots at churches and other public locations."

In 1951 Goggins was hit with a family tragedy when her husband died of a heart attack. With five children to support, the youngest 4 months, she went to work full-time.

Goggins married Robert Goggins in 1963, who she knew from Wisconsin. He died in 1977.

Prior to marrying her second husband, Goggins went to work in a non-nursing position for the Camas mill in the research department for a few years. Goggins was told when the mill nurse, who was expected to retire, left, the job would be hers. She took over the reins of mill nurse in 1955 and stayed on until her retirement on May 1, 1974.

Currently there is a second generation working as the mill nurse, Ellen Kinney, Goggins' daughter. She applied for the job and got it after her mother retired.

"They didn't know she was my daughter because we didn't have the same last name," she said.

But Goggins didn't officially retire until 1987. She worked as a private nurse for 13 years.

"I only had one patient for those 13 years," Goggins said. "I went to help out for two weeks and ended up staying. I really thought I was going to retire full-time, but I didn't."



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Goggins said the reason she decided to stop working in 1987 was the result of breaking her hip.

Aside from working as a nurse for 57 years in a number of different positions — floor supervisor, occupational health and other roles — Goggins has also been involved in the Camas-Washougal Soroptimist Club since 1957.

She has served as president of the club a number of times and has chaired many committees. One of her biggest contributing factors to the group is helping to prepare meals for the group's twice-monthly meetings. One includes a breakfast, while the other is a luncheon.

She also helps organize the household sales and other activities the Soroptimist club participates in.

As in the past, Goggins still helps out

with the community blood drives. In fact, she recently received her 20-year pin from American Red Cross for her volunteer efforts.

"When I'm around, I always take homemade bread and apple butter for those giving blood to have afterwards," Goggins, who has five children, four grandchildren, one great-grandchild and another on the way, said.

In addition to all her activities, Goggins also belongs to the Camas-Washougal Historical Society. In fact, her home built in 1906 is on the Clark County Heritage Register.

Goggins said she has enjoyed her work as a nurse and being involved in the community.

"I really loved nursing, I guess that's why I worked at it for 57 years," she said.